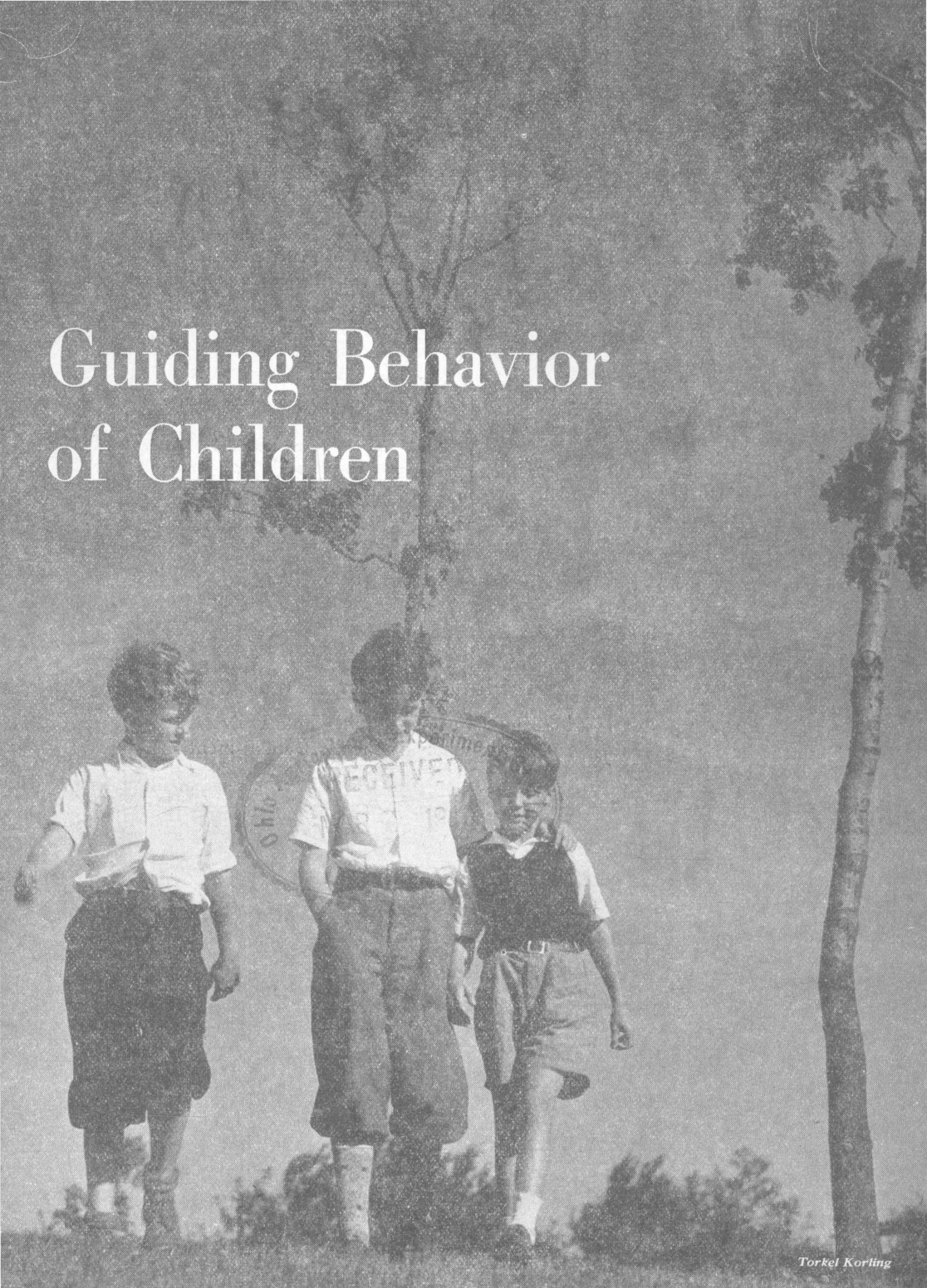
Guiding Behavior of Children



Torkel Korling

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GUIDING BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN—Bulletin 184
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Guiding Behavior of Children

By AMALIE K. NELSON, Ph.D.

Parents in a Changing World

"Like every living thing, the family must always be . . . influencing, and be influenced by the social conditions of the time."—*Groves and Ogburn.*

CHANGES OUTSIDE THE FAMILY CIRCLE

THE STORY is told that when the first steam engine started on its maiden trip, the people who came to watch it said, "It will never go." When to their amazement it did go, propelled by its own steam, there were some who said "It can never stop."

Since that time man has perfected a machine which makes it possible for him to fly, in spite of predictions that man could never learn to fly.

Our methods of transportation have undergone remarkable changes within the last twenty-five to fifty years.

We look with amazement at pictures of our home towns taken thirty and forty years ago. The type of architecture, the methods of transportation, the style of clothing have all changed. A horse and buggy is a novelty to be shown at county and state fairs.

Schools and methods of teaching have changed. Public schools have replaced private tutors. The curriculum includes many more subjects than were taught when we went to school. Children take a more active part in the school program than the sitting, listening part which was ours when we were children.

Change is inevitable. Whether we like it or not, we must admit that nothing we can do will stay the process of change. So impressed was one of the Greek philosophers with this fact that he said, "The only permanent thing is change."

CHANGES WITHIN THE HOME

Just as the conditions in the outside world are constantly changing, so too are conditions within the home.

In "Grandmother Brown's 100 Years" we have a splendid description of the changing home. Take, for instance, the work of women. In Grandmother Brown's time the women made clothes for all the members of the family, men included. They knit the underwear for their babies, helped with the work in the fields, and made odd pieces of furniture for their homes. The families were larger than ours. There was little time for club work; little time for reading and study; no time for movies, which, of course, had not yet been heard of; little time for concerts or the theater.

Women spent most of their day keeping their homes clean, the members

* This bulletin is the fourth of a series on child-development, prepared in cooperation with MARY E. GERLAUGH, formerly Child Development Specialist of the Ohio State University.

of their family fed and clothed. No devices such as electric sweepers, electric washers, mechanical refrigerators, and running water in the house made work easier for them and gave them moments of leisure for other occupations.

The relationships within the home were guided by such simple and definite maxims as "The man is the head of the house," "Children should be seen and not heard," and "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Unquestioned obedience of children and unquestioned authority of parents were accepted at the rule.

There was more family unity. The members of the family worked together and played together. Their few hours of leisure were spent in recreation for the whole family. Family picnics, folk dancing, the social activities of church and school were for everybody, young and old alike. The age groups were not as distinctly divided as they are today. Grandparents, father, mother, and all of the children went together to the Sunday School picnic or the Chautauqua.

Today, social affairs are planned for individuals of certain ages. Mother has her study group; father, his business association; 16-year-old Tom his camp; 10-year-old Mary her school group, and 5-year-old Billy plays with 5-year-olds. Each group is engaged in activities apart from the other members of the family. We believe today that each age feels most comfortable with individuals belonging to the same age group.

In the past, people created their own recreation, made their own games, or spent their few moments of leisure in doing things with their hands. It is interesting to note that the last few years, with their enforced leisure for many people, have brought a return to handcrafts such as sewing, knitting, crocheting, metal working, and woodcraft. Many people are turning back to simpler forms of recreation, are learning to make games, and to take part in group singing.

But we still have many agencies competing with the home for the attention and time of the family members. The schools of the past did not have glee clubs, orchestras, social clubs, and athletic teams to interest the children. The church of 50 years ago had no club rooms or recreation halls. There were no organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, and 4-H clubs to enlarge the child's world.

In looking back over times which have passed we should not feel compelled to compare them with ours in order to determine which is the better. It is not a question of the superiority of one age over another. Our interest is in the fact of change itself. Changes in our manner of living bring about changes in the relationships between members of the family.

The present day family with its one child or its two or three children is a different unit and has different problems than the family of the past, in which there were from five to ten children.

The automobile has brought with it a completely new set of problems. Time and distance are not the same as they were 25 years ago. Then, a 50-mile trip was a day's journey. Today we cover a 50-mile stretch in 1½ to 2 hours. Young people of today think nothing of driving 25 miles for the evening's entertainment. The automobile has brought with it more freedom. It has made possible an interchange of ideas between rural people and city people. They live in closer relationship. There is more give and take between them because of the greater ease of getting back and forth.

The position of women has changed. Women are engaged in such professions as teaching, law, medicine, and dentistry. Many women have positions in the world of business and industry. The financial management of the family resources is often left largely in the hands of women. This was not true several decades ago.

We are also less ready to rely upon authority than were people a generation ago. There is more question of what the teacher or the minister, the doctor or the lawyer says. Facts change rapidly from year to year, so that what was considered true 10 years ago is not necessarily believed to be true today.

To resist change is futile and makes the individual unhappy. Time moves on, whether we move with it or not. That individual lives the fullest and happiest life who develops a set of habits which will help him to meet the demands of the age in which he is living. This necessitates a constant remaking of ourselves. The habits of thinking and acting which served our needs when we were 18 will no longer serve us at 40. The world has moved on since we were 18. Have we moved with it?

Can We Have Set Rules of Behavior?

But, you are probably asking yourself, are not the rules which should govern our behavior permanent? Are not some acts always wrong and some always right, no matter what the age in which we live? It would be helpful if each of us were to draw up a list of rules which he considers permanent.

The various religions of the world have been interested in helping people develop such guides of behavior. But we find that they are subject to change and growth also.

Each one of us during his lifetime works out his own set of rules. Such rules become guiding principles of our actions. They are colored by what our own parents have taught us by word of mouth and by example. We, in turn, if we are taking our parental responsibilities seriously, are helping our children to develop serviceable principles of living. Customs and manners may change, laws and rules may be discarded, but *our life must be guided by principles*. Then only are we free. We cannot then be swayed by whims or temporary fads. But as we mature and grow older, *we should re-make and re-interpret constantly*.

Even such definite precepts as "Thou shalt not die," "Thou shalt not steal," need to be interpreted in the light of, let us say, the individual's age, his mental development, his home training, and the age in which he is living. When 2-year-old Nancy comes home from the neighbor's yard carrying Jimmy's teddy bear, is she stealing? She is taking what is not hers. Instead of calling her act "stealing," we say she has not yet learned what ownership means, and she must be taught. We do not believe that she should be punished for "stealing." We *do* believe that we must teach her that some things are Jimmy's and belong in Jimmy's house, and some things belong only to Nancy. And so we go with Nancy to help her return the teddy bear to its proper place.

We are at present placing more emphasis on "our," and less and less on "mine" and "thine." We are teaching our children how to cooperate and share, and are not as insistent as we were some years past on a rigid distinction between "mine" and "thine."

Thus, even our apparently permanent rules of behavior are constantly being modified and changed to make them most helpful to us at our present time of life.

One of the causes of the antagonism which often exists between members of different generations is our unwillingness to modify our rules of behavior as we get older. Seventeen-year-old Tom calls mother's ideas "Victorian," while mother frets about "the young people of today." Neither one is willing to change, and the battle is on. Harmony in the home can be realized only if we are willing to modify and re-modify codes of behavior as we grow older.

Have we changed our attitudes and beliefs during the last 20 years? Do we feel today as we did 20 years ago about (*a*) bobbed hair, (*b*) what constitutes an adequate diet, (*c*) sex education, (*d*) employment of women in industry, (*e*) use of cosmetics, (*f*) relief for the unemployed and aged?

Providing something harmless and interesting for children to do in their own backyard.

Twenty years ago a nurse was discharged from a hospital for having her hair cut. Today nobody takes time to notice how long or short a woman's hair is.

Our ideas concerning adequate diets are revised with increasing dietary and medical knowledge.

Customs of living and standards of conduct change from year to year.

It is essential that we develop *principles of living*. But let us be willing to modify these principles as we grow older, and as we find revision necessary for good adjustment. The home atmosphere must be such that the toddler, the active school boy, the sophisticated adolescent, the middle-aged parent, and even grandmother, herself, can breathe freely and without undue restraint. There will, no doubt, be conflicts, but, if harmony is to prevail, it is necessary that *all* of the members of the home should be willing to learn, willing to be considerate of the other person's viewpoint, and to change their own views as occasion demands.

Authority of Parents

"Teach your children to trust you and they will obey, but remember that more important than obedience is the teaching of such standards that your child will know what to do when you are not there to direct him."

PARENTS sometimes become greatly concerned because they vaguely feel that they no longer possess the authority which was typical of the parent of the past. There is a feeling that the child ought to be obedient and yet not too submissive and docile. The average parent wishes very much to be a companion to his child, but desires at the same time to keep the "upper hand," so to speak, in critical situations.

The typical parent of the past desired above all the respect of his children. The methods of obtaining respect were those of commanding strict obedience. Rigid discipline, although not the rule in all of the homes, was typical of many of them. It was believed that "original nature" was bad, and it took rigid discipline to train the "bad" out of children. Parents considered it more or less their duty to spank children for certain misdemeanors.

The present day parent is living in a different world than did his own parents. We know more about child psychology—about how children learn, how fears are developed, and why some people learn to live happy, well-adjusted lives, and some are so unhappy and discouraged. We know that the character and personality traits of individuals are not due entirely to heredity but are due in a large measure to childhood experiences and training methods used by parents. Standards of behavior have changed and are changing, and the old methods are not always successful. Too rigid a procedure may literally drive children entirely away from home.

The present day parent finds himself in a world in which the voice of youth is becoming stronger day by day. He is learning that young people can best be guided by trying to understand them and by appealing to their intelligence.

Adolescent daughters no longer believe that mother always knows best. Such a statement may even, at times, arouse their resentment and antagonism. The intelligent mother is learning to admit that sometimes the daughter knows best. Parents of teen-age children are learning that their own advice is taken only when given as advice and not as a command.

Many parents are puzzled and uncertain. Frequently it is their very uncertainty which makes their children disobedient.

Are we justified in expecting authority solely because we are parents? By what magic does the fact of parenthood give us knowledge sufficient to know always how to command?

It is not the fact of parenthood that gives us authority but the fact of *greater experience and knowledge*. Our appeal to our children should not be because life teaches us that this is the thing to do."

The child is quick to sense the standards of behavior of his own family group. One frequently hears even young children say "In our family we do this way." Family loyalty is very strong. The child's first attitudes and social

standards are those of his family. This places the responsibility of careful guidance on the parents.

As the child becomes older, he learns to make judgments according to his own experience and knowledge. When these judgments differ from those of the parent, conflict occurs. That parent is wise who is ready to talke the situation over with the child as though he were talking with another adult. The result of such a conference may prove that the parent was right or that the child was right.

There are some children who learn more quickly if they are allowed to proceed occasionally on their own mistaken judgment. Winifred, aged 14, wished to make her selection of summer shoes without her mother's advice. After some discussion she was allowed to do so, and admitted before the season was over that she had not bought wisely. She had bought several pairs of sandals, and did not have suitable shoes for all occasions. Having made this mistake she is now more ready to consult her mother when she is doing her personal shopping. Moreover, she has more respect for her mother's ability as a guide than if her mother had not allowed her to try her "own wings" in a shopping experience.

Attitudes of Parents

What is our own attitude toward the parent-child relationship? Which of the following attitudes is most nearly descriptive of ourselves?

1. *The Possessive Attitude.*

The parent who is characterized by this attitude feels the obligation of ownership. "I'm going to see to it that *my* child obeys." There is no uncertainty here. The parent feels certain of his ability as a trainer. He forgets that we *train* horses, but we *guide* and *direct* children. A horse always obeys, but there are times when even a child must do his own thinking. The possessive parent sometimes goes so far as to plan the child's entire life for him. Because he, the parent, did not have the opportunity of a college education, he is going to see to it that Charles and Mary go to college. Charles is to be a doctor, and Mary shall study music. This type of parent is usually proud of all that he is doing for his children, and cannot understand why Charles and Mary are so ungrateful.

What is the effect of this attitude on the life within the family? Usually one of two things happens:

a. The child complies and follows out his parents' plans for him. He becomes meek, complies easily, and depends entirely upon his parents for direction. Frequently the child coming from a home where the parent is extremely dominan lacks initiative and the spark of enthusiasm. He has not learned to think for himself. He lacks the power of independent judgment, and is uncertain in his actions. He grows up with a dependent attitude. He has learned to depend upon someone with a stronger will than his for direction. He has learned to obey—yes! But he has not become a self-directing individual. Which is the better?

b. The other effect of the possessive parental attitude is rebellion in children, either concealed or smouldering, or open rebellion. The child ceases to love

the parent. He treats him either with the respect which he accords a stranger or with a defiant attitude. In the July, 1936, issue of "Parents' Magazine" the appears an illuminating confession in an article entitled "Mistakes I've Made with My Boy." The young father who wrote the article was determined that he was going to teach his son to obey by exacting prompt and unquestioning obedience "because I say so." An older father warned him that there were different ways of teaching children to obey, but the young father proceeded in his headstrong manner. Not until his son was in his 'teens did he realize his mistake. He changed his manner radically, but what was done was done, and the father confesses that he lost his boy's confidence by means of building up in him subjective reservations and fears. Although their present relationship is a "close and sympathetic" one, the father feels that it could be more so had his attitude toward his little son been an understanding one rather than that of the stern parent.

If our relation to our children is that of the taskmaster, we must not be surprised if they do not seek us out for advice about their intimate problems later on. Someone else is going to hear about "the most wonderful girl in the world" or the "good looking chap with wavy black hair." We may have their respect but not their friendship and love.

We must come to a realization that children are personalities in their own right. Parenthood does not mean ownership.

2. *The Uncertain Atttiude*

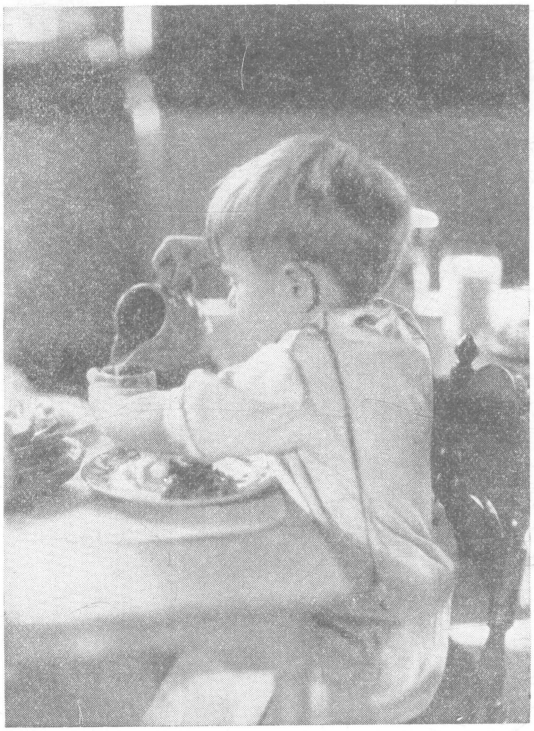
Uncertainty characterizes the relationship between some parents and their children. The parent has discarded the old disciplinary methods as outworn but has not yet found a satisfactory substitute. He is in a real dilemma. He has not worked out for himself a satisfactory *plan of guidance*, and is at a loss to know what to do when differences arise between himself and his child.

Some mothers who have done some (but not enough) studying of child psychology, fall into this class. They have read a few articles in magazines on "Obedience" or "Discipline," and have heard an occasional lecture by a child psychologist on the dangers of repressing children too much. They have heard of some of the unfortunate consequences of punishing children too severely, and are sincere in their earnest desire to refrain from such methods. All of this has had the result of making them uncertain about their own methods.

How do the children respond to this uncertainty? We can readily understand what happens. The following illustration is typical. One day while eating his dinner, 2-year-old Bobby poured part of his milk on the floor. Mother saw it, hurried to him and said "Oh, no, Bobby!" She got a cloth, washed it up, and while she was doing this, Bobby poured more milk on the floor. Mother said, "Bobby, Bobby, no, no!" She tried very hard to control herself. She got another cloth and wiped up the second spot, when down came the remainder of the milk that was left in the cup. Thoroughly exasperated now, she called loudly "Bobby, you naughty boy! Look at all the work you've made for mother. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" Bobby, of course, was not ashamed of himself. He was having a perfectly grand time. His mother had added to his pleasure by becoming so excited. He felt very important. It would not surprise us to hear that the episode was repeated the next day. The mother is exercising

all of the control which she possesses to refrain from spanking Bobby. *But she does nothing in place of not spanking* to correct Bobby's bad habit. Even 2-year-olds may take some responsibility in cleaning up for themselves, and mothers may insist that they eat good food in an acceptable manner.

Tom, who is 10 years old, is not improving very rapidly in acquiring habits of neatness. His mother thinks he is old enough to hang up his pajamas, and to throw his soiled laundry down the chute. She asks him each morning, "Tom, have you streightened up your room?" When he answers, "No, ma, not yet," she forgets about it. Later, after he has left for school, she finds the room disorderly, straightens it out herself, gives Tom a good scolding when he comes home at noon. Will such methods help Tom to develop habits of neatness?



Learning muscular control and self help increases the child's efficiency and joy in living.

The uncertain attitude invites disobedience. The child enjoys the attention he gets through mother's excitement. But nothing is gained as far as teaching the child habits of obedience.

The uncertain attitude of parents is responsible for much inconsistency in training methods. The parent has a vague feeling that the child is not learning to obey, and one day decides that perhaps the old methods are better, after all. A good spanking or shaking up is administered following a particularly annoying misdemeanor. The child's hurt look and uncontrolled sobbing bring remorse to the parent. The next day the child repeats behavior for which he received the sound spanking. This time the parent overlooks it entirely. The result of this procedure is that the child learns to try the parent out to see just how far he can go in his mischief. The child is branded as "mean," "mischievous," or "difficult to manage."

The real difficulty, however, lies in the parent's lack of a definite plan of procedure. Such a parent needs help and guidance. He needs to carry into practice specific methods of dealing with children. He must develop a *consistent procedure.*

3. *The Friendly, Assured Attitude.*

The attitude which is most successful in training children in habits of obedience is the friendly, assured attitude. We should not stand in puzzled awe of children, nor should we feel that we must be stern disciplinarians in order to command obedient behavior. If we are firm but kind and create in our children a feeling of trust and confidence in us, we will have relatively few disciplinary problems.

We must be willing to admit that occasionally our own behavior is as uncontrolled as is that of our children. When our children realize that we ourselves are learning to live up to the same standards which we set for them, they have a more commanredly feeling toward us.

Mrs. Forest had a great deal of work to do one day. She had planned to work on a paper which she was to prepare for a meeting. She wished absolute quiet and peace in the house, and she had selected the dining room with its large table as her workshop. Two-year-old Frances and four-year-old Jean were instructed to play outdoors and not disturb mother. All went well for about an hour, and then Frances came in to ask mother a question. She answered it hurriedly, and cautioned Frances not to come in again. A little later Jean came in and wanted a drink. She was told to go upstairs and ask grandmother to take care of her. Mother's tone of voice was harsh and unfriendly, and Jean began to whine and cry. As the morning wore on, mother became less controlled with each interruption. During the course of the day each child had been put in a room by herself, scolded severely several times, and the general atmosphere was threatening and stormy. The children sensed the mother's tenseness and they were fretful and whiny all day long.

By evening, mother had again gained complete control of herself and realized how unfair she had been in her treatment of the children. She realized that she should have planned the children's activities more carefully or have made other plans for her own work. She went upstairs with them after supper to supervise their activities preparatory for bath and bed. Peace had been restored. Suddenly Jean looked up at her mother and said to her: "Mother, do you know, today you were a very naughty mother." At first completely taken aback, the mother was, however, frank enough with herself to realize that the child had made an absolutely objective statement. She admitted that she had not been well controlled and she was sorry. Then the children and the mother discussed quite frankly what makes people "naughty" and the effect it has on others.

The mother's willingness to admit her own faulty behavior in this situation served to create a feeling of companionship and understanding between herself and the children.

The parent who enjoys doing things with children, who likes children in general and not only his own children, has few disciplinary problems. Children are quick to sense whether or not we are truly interested in what they are doing. But they also sense our feelings of annoyance. The individual who thinks children are a nuisance will probably find that children *do* make nuisances of themselves in his presence. We under-estimate their ability to judge our feelings toward them.

We would be more successful parents if we were more concerned with learning how "to live with our children," than with demonstrating our authority as parents. Authority should be based on *knowledge and experience* and is not gained by the mere fact of parenthood. If we learn to *live companionably* with our children; if we make a sincere effort to *understand* them by knowing what we may expect of them at various ages and stages of development; if we are *kind but firm in making requests*; and if we are *consistent* in our methods of control, then we need not feel concern about our authoriy. Ours will be an understanding, helpful, and satisfying relationship with our children.

Obedience

"If obedience is to be more than the submission of the weak to the domination of the strong, the control must be firm, kindly, reasonable, and consistent."—*Marion Miller.*

WHY IS IT that parents are so concerned about the problem of obedience? It would be helpful for all of us to analyze the reasons for desiring obedient children. *Why* do we want our children to obey? And *what* is it that we want them to obey?

In many instances the desire for obedience in children is prompted by the *parents' own desire for dominance.* It adds to our feeling of power to have our commands carried out immediately. Conversely, it thwarts our activity when our well laid schemes are not carried out. The honest parent will admit that very often he does not think through carefully the various demands which he makes of the child. They are not all really important. But, homehow, it *is* important to him that the child comply immediately.

The desire for power is a strong one in all of us. Sometimes it is as strong in the child as in the adult. Very frequently the disciplinary problems of the home, when analyzed, are shown to be nothing more nor less than the clashing of two wills. The issue itself is sometimes completely lost sight of, and the motive has become clearly a desire to come out the victor in this battle.

There are parents who believe that children should obey them *because they are their parents*; "Because I said so, and because I am your parent, therefore you must do it." Is that really a good reason for obedience? How does such an attitude react on a child? Often the resulting behavior of the child is stubbornness or resentment, or a surly compliance.

Whenever a problem of discipline becomes a clash of personalities, we should stop and analyze what is the issue at stake. Many of us issue too many commands, and do not distinguish between the important ones and those which are not so important.

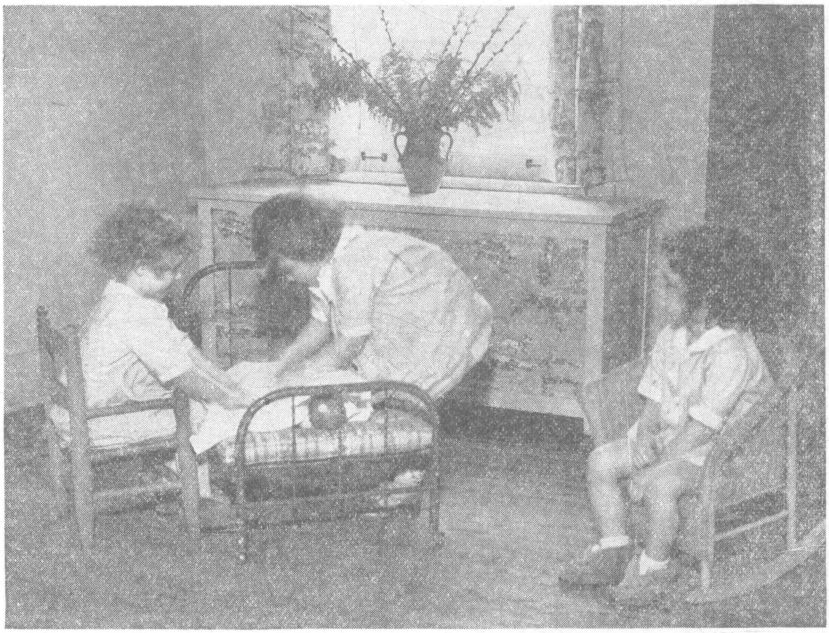
We should not feel that we will lose the children's respect when we need to admit that we have made a mistake. A parent need not be all-wise and all-powerful, to keep his children's respect. In fact, the parent who occasionally says "Well, it looks as though I made a mistake, John, and you were right," will

find that John will be more ready at a later time to admit that his parent was right, and he, John, was in the wrong.

It was 11:30 in the morning and dinner was ready for 3-year-old Donald and 5-year-old Mary. The children had been cutting up paper dolls. Scraps were strewn over the living room floor. Mother called from the kitchen, "It's time for dinner, children; pick up the scraps and wash your hands."

Mary answered, "Oh, mother, we don't want to. We want to play with the paper dolls this afternoon. ("Her voice sounds tired," notes mother to herself.)

What would you do, if you were the mother? Is there a way out without creating a disciplinary scene?



Learning cooperation through play. (Western Reserve Nursery School.)

The following facts were taken into consideration:

a. The time of day. Young children are tired and happy at 11:30 in the morning.

b. A scene would not help the dinner appetite.

c. Unwillingness to comply was not a habit with either of the children.

d. It was not considered wise to leave the room untidy until after the children's nap.

What the mother did:

The mother went into the living room and said, "Let's all pick them up together. I'll take this corner. Donald, you take that one, and Mary that one. Now it won't take long." The children complied immediately.

Another procedure which might have worked would have been to say: "All right, let's pick them up after dinner."

Had the mother not analyzed the situation as suggested above, but instead had insisted on her command being carried out as first stated by her, the children would probably both have been in tears, mother might have frightened them with angry scolding, and the dinner hour would have been a sorry affair.

Do you think she lost the children's respect by revising her original command?

When 10-year-old Hazel refuses to go to the store for mother, the wise mother will analyze the whole situation as suggested above, and not act impulsively because she has become angry.

Sometimes it is our tone of voice which invites disobedience. How do we ourselves feel when some person with whom we are working, on a committee, for instance, is too ardent a manager, and who in a high handed manner parcels out jobs to every member of the committee? We feel that we should be consulted as to our desire in the matter, and we somehow rebel at being told in an abrupt manner that we must do thus and so. The successful leader uses such phrases as "Would you like to," "Perhaps you could," "Will you please," "What would you prefer doing?" The same devices are successful in dealing with children. Sometimes it is our manner of asking children to do things which in itself is the deciding factor in obedience or disobedience. It indicates our own feeling of dominance.

Why should children obey? We might ask, "Why should *we* obey?" Everyone must learn to obey, because we believe that there must be law and order in the universe. If we are to live happily, we must learn to obey (*a*) the laws of nature, (*b*) civil law, and (*c*) social law. *What* should children obey becomes the important question. If we are to be strong, vigorous individuals we must know and obey the laws of health, eat healthful foods, exercise our bodies, and get sufficient sleep and rest. If we are to have sound minds we must obey the laws of mental health—no over indulgence in emotional scenes, practice rather the virtues of serenity and self restraint. If we are to live successfully with other people we must learn to restrain selfishness and greed. All of these things our children, too, must learn. Only as we become teachers of natural, civil, and social laws should our children obey us—not because we are their parents.

Why Do Children Not Obey?

> "In a misguided endeavor to do well by their children, many parents have allowed them to establish habits of inconsiderateness, self assertion, and irresponsibility which must some day be broken down, to the intense discomfort of the child.—*Willard Beatty.*

The answer to this question will involve an analysis of numerous factors. There are many reasons why children do not obey. Even the most cooperative child has days when his attitude is negative. The child has the difficult task before him of growing into a *self reliant, self directing individual.* But he must

also learn to comply with the demands of other people in his environment. He must learn to get along with adults as well as with children. It is not difficult to see that his task is not an easy one, and that some periods of stress and strain will accompany his learning.

The following are some causes of disobedience in children.

1. *Some parents are inconsistent* in their treatment of the child. A flippant expression such as "You're a dumbbell!" will be laughed at if the parent happens to be in a particularly jovial mood. The same expression used later may be the cause of severe reprimand and punishment.

Another procedure which makes the child disobedient is for the parent to discuss the child's reaction to punishment in a teasing manner later.

Mr. McBride prides himself on his discipline with his children. He believes in using the "strap," and enjoys embarrassing 8-year-old Richard by telling in his presence about "a session Richard and I had in the basement yesterday." Do you consider this a good method for securing obedience?

What effect will the father's methods have on the relationship between father and son?

Punishment to be successful should not be treated later as a joke.

2. Some parents have the habit of requesting the child to do something and *not following the thing through* to see that it is really done. They are helping the child to form habits of disobedience.

It would be a helpful bit of self analysis to check up on ourselves to see (*a*) how many things we ask our children to do in the course of a day, (*b*) how many of these were really important for the child to do, and (*c*) whether or not we followed through with the child until they were done.

A command that is worth giving is also worth being carried through. Perhaps we ask too many things of our children, so that they form the habit of listening only half heartedly. They think that we will probably forget what we said, so why should they bother to obey?

3. Children do not learn to obey *if punishment is administered only when the parent becomes angry*. The child is quick to sense from the tone of voice whether or not it is important to obey. A child who has become accustomed to responding only when the parent becomes angry will allow himself to be called several times before he responds. Tom and William, aged 9 and 7, were playing in the vacant lot next to William's home. William's mother knew they were somewhere near, and called from the back porch, "Bill," where are you? Will you come here, please?" Both boys heard her, but neither answered. Mother called again, "Bill, oh Bill!" Still no answer. Finally, Tom said to William, "Why don't you answer her?" Said William, "I usually wait to see if she really means it. She forgets half of the time, and then I don't have to do it. But, boy, when she gets mad, I sure hop to it!"

Many children learn habits of disobedience because their parents punish them only when they themselves are thoroughly angry. Only those commands are obeyed which the child deems hazardous not to obey.

4. Children are sometimes disobedient because of *feelings of resentment.* They hear themselves compared with other children who are described always

as superior to themselves. "I don't see why you can't look as clean as James does. Your finger nails are always black"; or "Why don't you keep your room as neat as Mary's. You're older than she is."

Do such remarks encourage an obedient attitude in our children? Never. We make them resentful toward James and Mary and ourselves.

Let us be careful not to make our children recentful by making them feel inferior to other children. Perhaps the standards of behavior which we set up arbitrarily are too high for them.

5. Some parents encourage disobedient behavior by *discussing children's faults in their presence.* James is going to persist in his disobedient habits so long as he hears his mother say to the neighbor, "I can't do a thing with that boy! He doesn't pay any more attention to what I say than if I were a fly on the wall."

It is a strange thing that so many parents of disobedient children discuss that very disobedience so freely. Occasionally one can detect a note of amusement in their accounts of the child's escapades. Sometimes the note is one of frustration, sometimes downright anger. Only very occasionally is there a sincere willingness to analyze the causes back of the child's disobedience. We must remember that children learn disobedience as well as obedience. In order to help the child to learn obedience, we must know what is making him disobedient.

6. Another cause of disobedience in children is *disagreement among the adults* in the home regarding methods of control to be used. Mother refuses to give Miriam five cents to buy candy, so Miriam goes to father and says, "Daddy, Mother won't give me a nickel for candy. Can't I have a nickel, daddy? Please, daddy, give me a nickel." Father can't resist the pleading voice and appealing smile, and Miriam gets her nickel. She is learning that there is more than one way of getting what she wants in her home. If she begs hard enough she may be able to get out of doing her share of the work around the house, too.

Add to the family circle a grandmother or an aunt, and the disciplinary problems sometimes become even more complicated. If children are to learn obedience, the adults in charge of their training must agree on methods that are to be followed. If father and mother do not agree, the child learns to play the game of "working" each one in turn until he gains his end.

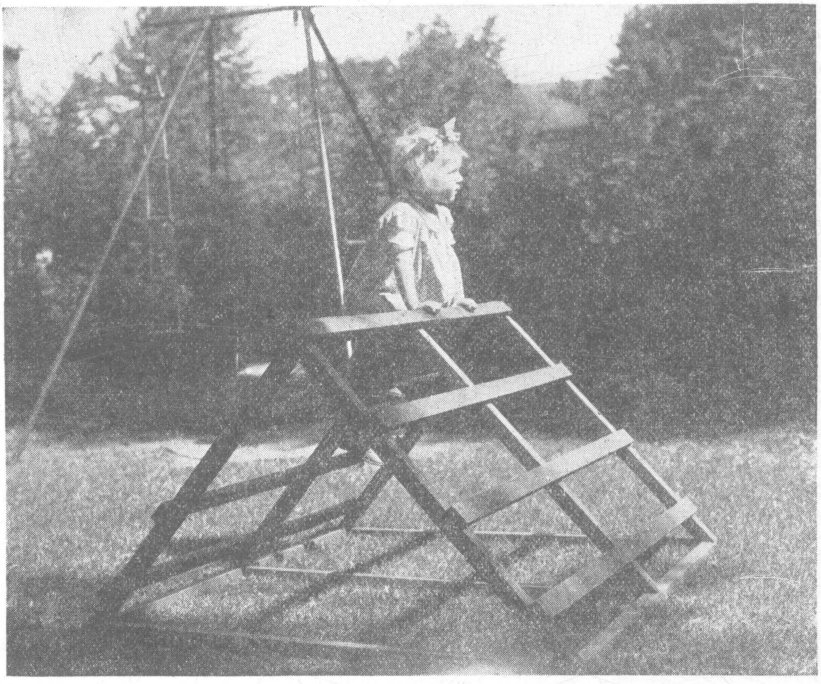
Differences between the adults should not be discussed in the child's presence.

7. Another factor underlying disobedient behavior is that *the child gets more attention when he is "naughty"* than when things are running smoothly. Most children enjoy being the center of attention. They experience a feeling of power at being able to stir a grown person to anger. The obvious lesson for the adult to learn from this is not to allow himself to become angry or excited. Perhaps the most successful punishment for such a child is quietly and firmly putting him by himself. The angry person is at a disadvantage and does not command the child's respect.

8. *Sometimes disobedience is the result of physical causes.* The child who is tired and hungry becomes irritable more easily than the child who is in good

physical condition. It is well to consider the time of day and the child's general state of health when problems of discipline arise. Food and sleep may be recommended rather than punishment at such times.

It is a common observance among parents that the day following a holiday is usually a difficult one. It is safe to say that the disobedient, irritable behavior exhibited by children on such days is due primarily to physical causes—overstimulation, fatigue, and perhaps indigestion, due to eating too much candy. Fortunate is the home in which the parents are able to exercise self control sufficient to smooth over difficulties without adding to the general disorder by being themselves high strung and irritable.



Providing equipment to satisfy the child's inner impulses is better than thwarting them.

9. Another cause of disobedience is *bribing the child.* "If you'll eat your spinach, you may have a piece of candy," or "If you'll bring me my book, I'll give you a penny." Such methods will succeed in building up in the child an expectation of a reward for everything that he does. As a result the question of whether or not he will obey becomes one of whether or not he will get something for obeying. His response to a request will become "What'll you give me if I do?"

We are not preparing him to meet life squarely if we allow such an attitude to develop. He must learn, sooner or later, that no one is paid for good behavior.

10. *The parent who breaks promises* which he has made to the child is encouraging disobedient behavior. Let us be careful not to make promises which either we cannot keep or do not intend keeping. We will lose our children's respect and confidence.

This does not mean that where we find it necessary to change our plans, our children cannot learn to adjust to them.

It was Sunday afternoon and the entire family—father, mother, James, aged 6, and Jane, aged 4, had planned to go for a ride in the car. Just as they were about to leave the house the telephone rang, and father, who was a physician, was asked to attend to a patient in a neighboring town. The pleasure trip had to be called off. The children understood the reason for the change in plans, and were satisfied to go for a walk with mother instead. This situation is quite different from breaking a promise.

Some parents habitually promise candy or a ride or anything to quiet an unruly child, but never seriously intend following through with the promise. It is such behavior which invited a distrustful and disobedient attitude in the child.

1. We encourage disobedience *when we ask of a child behavior which is not in accord with his physical, mental, or social development.* To expect a normal, healthy 3-year-old to sit quietly during a church service which lasts from 1 to 2 hours is expecting abnormal behavior. We could at least provide him with pencil and paper or a picture book to look at.

Sometimes we expect too much in the way of table manners of young children. Their muscular coordination is such that they do not have control sufficient to avoid occasional spillings. Let us not become too disturbed. Encouragement for good responses is better than punishment for poor ones.

It would be well for us to question whether the kind of behavior which we are expecting of the child corresponds with his development. "Is he able to keep clean hands and yet play vigorously. Can he dress and undress himself as quickly as we think he should? How many directions can he keep in mind? Perhaps we give too many at one time. How lang can he attend to any one thing at a time?"

12. We will not get willing obedience from the child *if we give commands abruptly without considering what he is doing* at the time. It would be well for us to practice such phrases as "Could you stop a minute and do . . . for me?" "Could you do me a favor?" "When you have finished, will you . . . ?"

If we show interest in his activity, the child is more ready to show an interest also in what we are doing. A child may refuse to do what is asked because of interest interest in what he is doing. If we would take the time to find out what he is doing, and suggest a place at which he might stop in order to do our bidding, he would comply more readily.

There are many other reasons why children do not obey. Those listed above are suggestions which should encourage us to study our own methods with children. Perhaps we need to revise them.

"Freedom is only attainable through discipline."—*Marion Miller.*

Children Like to Obey

Adults who are successful in their relationships with children will tell you that children like to obey. They like to know that there are definite rules in the home to which they must comply and that there is system and order in the home. A feeling of security results from a well regulated home, in which parents agree on matters of discipline, and in which the child knows what is expected of him.

However, the child learn habits of obedience, just as he learns habits of disobedience. The methods used by the adult may establish obedient or disobedient behavior. The child learns methods of responding to requests just as he learns, for instance, to lace his shoes. Both sets of habits follow the recognized principles of learning. (See Extension Bulletin No. 181, "Helping Children to Learn.")

The following suggestions may prove helpful:

1. Habits conducive to the good health of the child should become routinized while the child is very young. There should be no question, for instance, concerning the hour for meals, for bedtime, and other health habits. For these the parent should assume responsibility. The child of 2 or 3 years *expects* his nap to follow automatically after his noonday meal; he *expects* to wash his hands before meals. *He enjoys the routine and likes to obey.* He expects a certain procedure, and will frequently object if the parent forgets a part of the routine, such as brushing teeth before or after the evening bath.

2. Children obey more cheerfully *when we give reasons and explanations with requests or denials of their requests.*

Most of us undervalue children's intelligence and ability to understand reasons. Even a baby of 8 or 9 months begins to understand cause and effect. A child is never too young for reasons.

One afternoon a mother took seven children of her neighborhood ranging in age from 3 to 7 years to a public playground nearby. Knowing how hard it is for children to leave play, she said to them before they started, "Now, children, I'm the only one in the group who is wearing a watch, so I'm the only one who will know when we must come home for supper. It takes about 15 minutes to walk home from the playground, so when I call you, you must understand that I have looked at my watch and have decided that it is time to start home. Do you understand?" A hearty and cheerful "Yes" was the answer. It is easy to understand why the children were ready to leave when the signal was given.

Some parents fear that they will encourage a habit of arguing if they always give reasons and explanations. The reverse is true. If we satisfy the child's desire for understanding, he is less apt to argue than if we do not give reasons for our requests. Moreover, he expects our requests to be logically thought through, and will be more ready when the occasion comes to do something for us even though he does not himself understand why we wish it done.

When we are correcting undesirable behavior, the habit of explanation is even more important. So often we merely call attention to what is wrong, but do not suggest a better way of doing the thing. Whenever possible we should suggest a substitute activity. The child who is pulling all the lovely flowers in

your garden will get just as much pleasure picking dandelions or clover blossoms. If splashing water is annoying in the bathroom, perhaps you could fill an old tub of water and let the children splash to their hearts' content in the backyard. Water play in itself is harmless, and gives keen pleasure to young children.

We could avoid many disciplinary situations if we were more alert at finding substitute activities for undesirable ones. This is as true of adolescent boys and girls as it is of the younger children.

3. Obedient behavior is encouraged in our children if *we do not make too many commands*. Demand obedience to a few important requests and let these be reasonable. Most of us talk too much, and confuse our children by asking too many things of them during the course of a day. The children listen with only half an ear, not certain which of our many commands are really important. Not until they detect anoyance in our tone of voice do they finally obey.

4. *Our tone of voice* has much to do with compliance or lack of compliance in our children. We ourselves bristle when someone uses the voice of a military commander in an effort to get us to do something. Our children like to obey if *we show them some respect* in our manner of talking with them. Our tone of voice should be quiet and assured, as respectful as is that which we use with adults.

5. Sometimes the child does not obey because he has not heard. *We must gain his attention before we make our requests.* Frequently the parent begins scolding the child before the child is even aware of having been called. This situation occurs most often in homes where there is much talking and the child is called many times. The child develops a protective deafness which can be penetrated only by loud shouting. The child obeys willingly if few requests are made, and if these are given in a quiet, assured tone of voice.

The Older Child and Obedience

> "Respect the child. Trespass not on his solitude. Be not too much his parent."—*Emerson.*

If we are to keep the confidence and goodwill of our children and young people as they grow up, it is essential that we consider our methods of discipline carefully. Our aim should be to gain the growing child's cooperation rather than to make of him a person who obeys instantaneously. We should make a conscious effort in our dealings wih him to speak to him not as one having authority, but as one who desires his friendship.

As our young people grow older, talking things over should gradually replace handing down ready-made plans. Dorothy Canfield Fisher refers to this as "the sliding scale of obedience." You would decide for your 4-year-old daughter that she must wear a sweater or coat. Your 14-year-old daughter should be able to decide that for herself.

Much of the antagonism that exists between 'teen-age children and their parents is due to the unreadiness of parents to realize that their children are growing up. When parents treat 14-year-old sons and daughters as though they were 4-year-olds, a clash is certain to follow.

The 'teen age is characterized by problems which differ markedly from the problems of the earlier years of the child's life. The maturing of the reproductive organs is accompanied by changes in the young person's mental, physical, social, and emotional life.

The dreamy tendencies which predominate one day are replaced the next by a "let's get going" frame of mind. The shy young thing suddenly attains unlimited popularity among the boys. Childish traits and adult characteristics play their alternating parts in the girl and boy of 'teen age, while we are the more or less helpless onlookers in this drama of youth's efforts to grow up.

If only we could realize how eager they really are to confide in us, we would be more ready to invite confidence! To tell our innermost secrets is a difficult task for all of us. For the adolescent it is sometimes impossible. Nor must we insist that we know every phase of his existence. He is unconsciously making a tremendous effort to become adult. His growing up is accompanied by many emotional "growing pains." Let us "respect his solitude." Prodding for confidences is usually not a successful method.

A correct start in habits of independence will make later weaning from parental authority less disturbing.

What are the traits which invite confidence? Do not confide in people who are critical of our behavior? Do we tell our innermost thoughts to people whose opinions usually differ from ours?

Is it not true that the people in whom we confide are those who seem to understand us and who do not make us feel inferior? We would never confess mistakes to the person with the "I told you so" attitude. We confide in those who are ready to try to understand our behavior, rather than those who just know we couldn't do anything right. We are more willing to take helpful criticism and guidance from a person of sympathetic understanding.

Apply this now to the adolescent who is passing through years of unusual emotional experiences. Of course, he makes many mistakes; he does many things which he wishes he had not done. He also experiences many new

pleasures. Life is full of excitement and joy. He does not always understand the forces that are propelling him onward. It is important that we, his parents, understand them. For only by a sincere willingness to understand him, can we help him. Criticism, sarcasm, a shocked or hurt attitude, and severe rebuke will never serve to create a friendly feeling between our young people and ourselves. On the other hand, the setting of high standards of conduct accompanied by a sympathetic attitude, friendly encouragement, and a sense of humor will do much to help us keep the friendship and goodwill of our young people.

The 'teen age youth should be ready to make more and more decisions on his own initiative. If the relationship between himself and his parents has been a good one up to the 'teen age, he will consult his parents frequently. If the parents have been too authoritative and too rigid in their discipline, the young man or woman will rebel and wish to break away from home completely.

Young people need our guidance and counsel. They will seek it only if we respect them and treat them as becomes their age. Let us be more concerned with gaining their friendship and cooperation than with making obedient children of them.

Some Suggestions on Securing Obedience

1. Children obey willingly if our requests are reasonable.

2. Our tone of voice should be quiet and assured to gain the child's cooperation.

3. We should treat children with the same respect which we show to adults.

4. We should give few commands and see to it that they are carried out. Giving too many commands confuses the child. Repeating requests invites disobedience.

5. It is essential that we be consistent. To laugh at a misdemeanor one day and punish the child for it the next day is inconsistent and does not encourage obedience.

6. We should not discuss a child's faulty behavior in his presence. If we do, we will not only embarrass the child but we will encourage even more undesirable behavior.

7. Sometimes a child is irritable and disobedient because he is tired or hungry. Rest and food are required in such a case instead of punishment.

8. If we punish the child only when we become angry we are not helping the child to learn what he may do and what he may not do.

9. It is essential that father and mother agree on methods of discipline. If they do not, children do not develop obedient behavior.

10. Our attitude toward our children should be neither that of the stern disciplinarian, nor yet that of the parent who believes that one should never interfere with a child's activities. We should be friendly and assured, and expect obedience to reasonable commands.

Punishment

"Our part is mainly one of guiding, with but little of correcting."—*William H. Kilpatrick.*

MANY PARENTS think of punishment in terms of corporal punishment alone. To them the word punishment means spanking or slapping or otherwise inflicting bodily pain. When a parent says "I don't believe in punishing children," he usually means that he disapproves of inflicting bodily pain. For life itself administers punishment, if we accept the definition given in Blatz and Bott, "The Management of Young Children." According to these authors punishment is defined as "disagreeable consequences attached to an act in order to discourage its repetition."

When a child touches a hot toaster and burns his hands, he learns not to touch hot toasters. The burning in this instance was the punishment. However, we must still help him to distinguish between a hot toaster and a toaster. His experience may have the effect of teaching him to avoid touching all toasters. We cannot think of punishment apart from the more general problem of helping children to learn (see Extension Bulletin No. 181). *It is more desirable to have a positive plan of encouraging learning than to be concerned about developing specific techniques of punishment.*

WHY DO WE PUNISH CHILDREN?

1. Some parents punish children out of a *sense of duty*. Their parents punished them when they were children, and they feel vaguely that punishment, as such, is good for children.

They believe that the easiest way to get a child to conform is to punish him for not conforming. The parent feels that he has performed his parental duties when he has punished the child.

This attitude is gradually changing. Not many parents feel impelled to punish out of a sense of duty. We are learning more about children's motives of behavior, and are desirous of guiding our children as intelligently and wisely as possible. Such guidance may call for punishment or it may not, depending on the child to be guided, and the ability of the parent as "guide."

2. Punishment is administered often because the *parent has become angry*. Very seldom do we punish as immediately and impersonally as does the hot toaster, for instance. We hold on to ourselves, try to conceal ourselves until we have reached the breaking point, and then comes a flood of angry words, emphasized perhaps by angry spanking. The explosion has done the parent more good than it has the child. Perhaps the child has done before the same thing for which he is being spanked, but the parent was feeling in a jovial mood and overlooked it. Punishing children because we are angry is not a good reason for punishing.

3. Sometimes we punish children because *they annoy us and we do not wish to be annoyed*. We think children are too noisy or too active, too much in our way. We silence them by means of punishment. Is that a good reason for punishment?

Anyone who understands child nature knows that the normal healthy child is active and enthusiastic. If we show an interest in what he is doing we are helping him to learn.. To shout to a group of children "Don't make so much noise," is not as good teaching as to find out first what the noise is all about, and to suggest quietly that they would disturb the adults less if they were less noisy. An order that is shouted is given less attention than one that is given quietly and directly to the child.

4. Punishment is sometimes given because *the parent is fatigued and ill.* Mothers often need rest as much as their children do. Many mothers admit that they make the most serious mistakes in disciplining their children on those days when they are themselves tired. It takes will power and strong determination to remain calm and think clearly when one is tired at the end of a hard day's work. Occasional rest periods are to be recommended for all mothers, and especially for mothers of young children. Self control is difficult when one is fatigued.

5. *The only good reason for punishing children is to change a specific form of behavior.* Punishment should be followed by methods of helping children to learn desirable forms of behavior.

Some students of child psychology question the value of punishment as an aid to learning. They believe that it is better teaching to taech desirable forms of behavior than to punish for undesirable ones. If Bobby is not to throw his milk and food on the floor, we must take time to teach him how to drink his milk and eat his food (see page 9). Our chief interest should be to encourage the child's learning. Desirable methods of behaving should replace undesirable ones.

We surround the life of our young people with much criticism. We dislike modern dancing. We worry about the use of the family car. We object to much of their social behavior. But do we make any constructive suggestions? Our efforts should be directed toward devising methods and suggestions for entertainment which are just as enjoyable, but are not objectionable. Do we help them plan their parties? Do we show interest in their sports and school games? Criticism antagonizes them. A friendly, helpful interest will win their friendship. We should think of discipline as a means of encouraging children and young people to cooperate with us, rather than as a method of restraining them.

How Do We Punish Children?

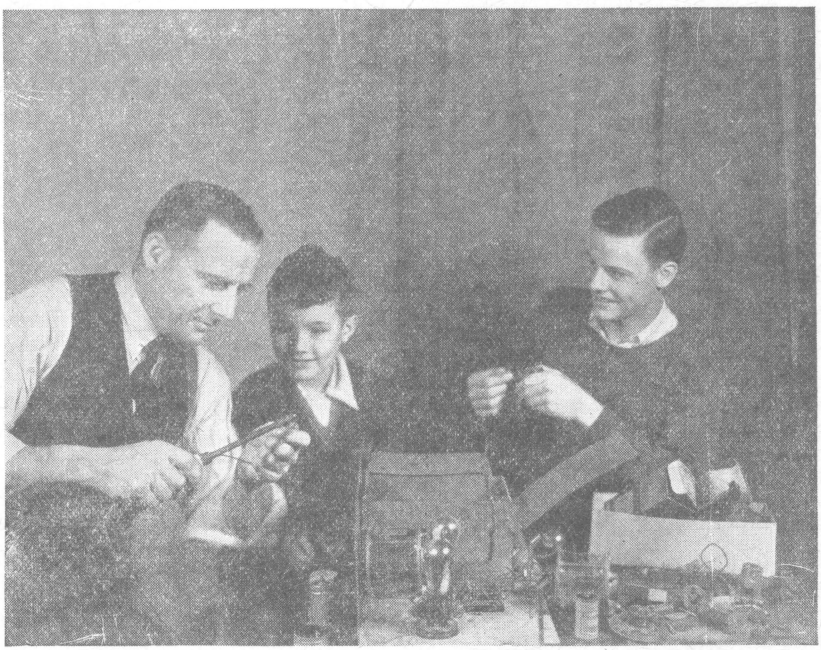
> "Control by mood spells maladjustment; control by intelligent study means healthy mindedness."
>
> —*William H. Kilpatrick.*

Children do not all react in the same way to the same kinds of punishment. For this reason, it is impossible to say that certain kinds of punishment will correct specific kinds of behavior. For some children, physical punishment is never to be recommended. If the child becomes resentful and strikes back; if he becomes too docile or afraid; or if he becomes angry wioh the parent, physical forms of punishment should not be used.

1. Should physical punishment ever be used? There are many different answers to this question. Some authorities say that it is possible to bring up a

child so that he cooperates with others in the home without the parent ever resorting to physical punishment. Others believe that spanking while the child is very young (3 years or younger) is a legitimate means of punishment. All of the authorities agree that if spanking is used at all it should be used sparingly while the child is young, and never after the child is old enough to understand reasoned behavior.

The White House Conference report as given in the book "Happy Childhood," by John E. Anderson, shows that "the better educated and more trained the parent and the better his social background, the less frequently is spanking resorted to as a mode of punishment." Thom in "Everyday Problems of the Everyday Child" says, "We have no quarrel with those who claim that corporal



Companionship is better than authority in the family.

punishment is occasionally of value in certain cases during the preschool years. A sharp smack on the hands may serve a very useful purpose in reminding the child that certain acts are forbidden, that they bring disapproval and occasionally pain. We believe, however, that corporal punishment could be entirely eliminiated as a disciplinary method without great loss."

Because spanking is such an easy disciplinary device, there is danger of using it too frequently. The much spanked child is usually neither obedient nor cooperative. He finally becomes immune, and frequently sullen and defiant.

2. Scolding is used more frequently in correcting the behavior of older children. As with spanking, it is effective only when used sparingly. Constant nagging and scolding create an unhappy atmosphere in the home and do not encourage a cooperative attitude in the child.

If by scolding we mean a forceful explanation of our thought, it is sometimes successful in helping the child to correct wrong behavior. Its effectiveness is in proportion to its limited use.

3. Occasionally a child's "naughtiness" is for the purpose of gaining attention. The obvious corrective procedure for such a situation is ignoring the child.

Fussy eating habits are sometimes corrected by paying no attention whatsoever to whether or not the child eats, or to what he eats. If the child gets more attention by refusal to eat than by eating, he will continue to refuse to eat. If the parent succeeds in adopting the attitude "I don't care whether he eats or not," the refusal sometimes ceases.

Very frequently, effective punishment for the antics of young children is to ignore them completely.

Young people of the 'teen age also like attention. Much of their "shocking" behavior is evidence of their desire for attention. They desire the attention and admiration of the other sex. They think it a real achievement to shock older people. Some of their pranks are planned for the very purpose of making older people notice them. They enjoy discussing their escapades with their friends later on. One can detect a note of thrilling adventure when they use such phrases as "Mother was furious," "Dad just raved."

A sense of humor frequently can relieve a situation which might become tense: "Reminds me of my own youth," or "Let me tell you what I did one day when I was your age, and how the tables turned on me." Such a reaction gives a more comradely touch to the relationship, and invites confidence.

4. Putting a child by himself when he does not get along with other children is good corrective procedure. He may be put in his bedroom or in some room downstairs. Never put him in a dark closet or room. Punishment which frightens the child should never be used. We may be encouraging a habit far worse than the one we are trying to correct. Hitting other children, biting or scratching them, should be followed by removing the child from the group. He will understand that this is fair. He has not yet learned how to play with other children.

5. Many parents try to punish by *the use of deprivation.* This method may be helpful in some cases, but so often the deprivation has no connection with the misbehavior. It does more harm than good when the punishment is too severe. To deprive a child of an excursion or entertainment because he has loitered about getting ready and is late may be effective, but to deprive him of an excursion because he has failed in school work or because he has been unfair in play, or because he has been rude, is apt to make him sullen and resentful.

Some General Principles

1. Punishment should be used only to correct undesirable behavior. If it does not do this, perhaps there are other factors which need to be considered.

a. Does the child have enough play equipment or construction material to keep him busy? Does he have the type of book that interests him? Does he have wholesome recreation? A busy child is seldom a disciplinary problem.

b. Do we scold and punish so often that this method of disciplining has lost its effectiveness?

c. Do we take time to know *why* the child is disobedient or annoying?

2. We should not punish in anger.

3. We should make certain that the child knows *why* he is being punished. If we wait until father comes home at night and let him do the punishing, the value of the punishment has been lost. The child no longer associates the punishment with the undesirable act.

4. We should be careful that the punishment is not too severe. To deny a pleasure such as a picnic, party, or entertainment to which the child has been looking forward for weeks is too severe a punishment for the ordinary misdeed. Such denial may create a more uncooperative attitude than the one we are trying to correct.

5. The most desirable relationship between parents and children is one of cooperation. Many so-called misdeeds on the child's part are not prompted by harmful motives.

6. Discipline should not be based on an emotional appeal.

If our children are obedient only because they fear us, what kind of behavior will they exhibit when the fear is removed?

We should also avoid using such devices as "You love me, don't you? Then do what I ask because you love me." Love and affection should not be played with in such a way. Moreover, such an appeal may serve to lessen the child's love for us.

7. A helpful principle to keed in mind is that we shall look upon a lapse in behavior as an occasion for teaching correct behavior.

When 2-year-old Bobby throws his milk, teach him how to drink it.

When 3-year-old Nancy writes on the wallpaper, get a piece of paper and teach her how to use pencil and crayon.

When 6-year-old Mary breaks a dish, teach her how to hold it securely.

When children of school age use abusive language in their play, help them to learn better language. Too often our discipline is in terms of restraint. Let us strive to make of it a positive, directing procedure.

Encouraging Desirable Behavior

THE PROBLEMS of discipline, when sifted down to their essential parts, become problems of guiding children wisely. We should be concerned with the problem of helping them to develop standards of behavior. They must not grow up with a feeling of dependence upon their parents. As children become older they should know without consulting us that some things are done and some things are not done. Otherwise, they will not be meeting life squarely. How can we help them to develop such standards of behavior?

The following suggestions may help:

1. *Allow the Child to Succeed.*

We ourselves are encouraged in our work when we feel that we are successful. So often we handicap children because we expect adult behavior of them.

Let us not expect them to live up to adult standards. Even though 2-year-old Jimmy has crossed his shoes laces incorrectly and the strings are in the wrong holes, encourage his learning by saying "That's fine, Jimmy! You're learning." Tie the laces without relacing the shoes. Let him feel successful.

Older children also react favorably to praise. Ten-year-old Janet can probably not do the dishes as speedily nor as carefully as mother, but encourage her by praising her general attitude of helpfulness.

Our own experiences with ungrateful people should warn us against using too much criticism with our older children.

Interested in doing a real job.

If the child is to succeed we must see to it that the things we ask him to do are possible for him to do. This means that we must know more about the nature of children, and about how they develop. Instead of scolding children of 2 to 5 years of age for passing rapidly from one activity to the next, we should understand that young children cannot attend to one thing for long periods of time. Lack of concentration is normal at their age.

2. *Praise More and Blame Less.*

Approval for desirable behavior is a better teaching method than blame or punishment for undesirable behavior. Ten-year-old Tom is more interested in tinkering with old parts of an automobile than he is in clean fingernails. Praising him for his inventiveness is better for him than blaming him for black fingernails.

Children are encouraged when we heartily approve of something which they have done. They are like adults in this respect.

In Young's book, "Motivation of Behavior," a study of the relative value of praise and reproof is reported. Herlock gave a series of tests to third, fifth, and eighth grade children in the New York City and Harrisburg, Pa., schools. After the first test had been given, the children were divided into three groups. One group was highly praised for good performance on the first test and encouraged to do even better on the next test. The second group was reproved for poor work, but told that they would be given another chance. The third group was retested without being either praised or reproved. On the retest both the praised and reproved groups improved much more than did the group which had received no instructions. The amount of improvement of the praised and reproved groups was approximately the same.

However, when the test was expanded to cover a longer period of time, and the children each day for five days were given tests in arithmetic, preceded either by praise or reproof, the children in the praised group did far better work than those in the reproved and control groups. Herlock concludes that praise is the "best form of incentive" to use. Young warns us that not all forms of praise and reproof are equally valuable, and that probably the effectiveness of our use of these incentives depends to a large extent upon the child's own self esteem.

We should be careful not to indulge in praise to excess. Our aim should be to help the growing child to understand that the highest type of motivation comes from the knowledge of work well done, even if no one says anything about i. But it takes the greater part of a lifetime to atain such an ideal.

3. *Other Rewards.*

Many modern educators are seriously questioning the whole technique of rewards as incentives for learning. Some modern schools have gone so far as to do away with the system of giving grades for success or lack of success in school. These educators argue that the incentive should be in the work or in studying itself. What we wish to encourage is a love of learning in itself. Schools should serve to instill in children an attitude of eagerness for knowledge. Instead of thinking that the end of schooling marks the end of learning, we should look upon schools as centers in which children are trained in serviceable attitudes toward life. Arbitrary standards of perfection are not set up, but each child is encouraged to work according to his own ability and talent. He is encouraged to compare his record with his own abilities and not with those of another child.

Our methods of handling children in early learning situations will determine to a large extent how much eagerness the child shows in later learning. An excessive use of rewards may develop in him an attitude of interest in the reward rather than in the work itself. "What will you give me if I do?" will be the response when we request something of him. He is developing habits of securing rewards rather than habits of obedience or cooperation.

Our use of rewards should be guided by our aim in helping the child to develop useful attitudes.

Summary of the Problems Relative to Desirable Behavior.

To summarize, we might say that the basic considerations of the problems of discipline and obedience are as follows:

1. We should become aware of the fact that we are striving to develop an individual increasingly able to *guide himself*.

2. We cannot today live by rule of thumb. Our aim should be to *teach our children how to think* rather than *what to think*.

3. We should practice the habit of *analyzing a situation*, taking into consideration such facts as (a) the child's age, (b) the time of day, (c) what the child is doing, (d) our own habits of talking, commanding, and emotional control.

4. *Every human relation must strike a balance of power*. The child must not feel overcome by an overpowering parent.

5. *Guiding in desirable behavior is better than punishing for undesirable behavior*.

6. *Praise is a better technique than blame*.

7. If we succeed in building up in our children *feelings of trust and loyalty*, the problems of discipline take care of themselves.

Our Aim in Guiding the Child's Behavior

In the relation between desire and accomplishment is found the key to happiness.—*John E. Anderson.*

WHAT IS IT that all of us, adults and children alike, want most in life? What is it that parents wish most for their children?

Why are we so interested in making of our children obedient and well disciplined individuals?

Although we are somewhat vague in expressing our desires, our deepest desires are those of freedom, growth, usefulness, and happiness.

Our happiness depends largely upon our feeling of usefulness—the feeling that someone needs us and that we fill a place in the world. Unhappy indeed is the person who feels that there is no place for him in the world. The child derives his happiness largely from his feeling of security. His father and mother love him, he is an important member of the family circle. Let us not take from him this feeling of being needed. We can do much in our training of children to help them develop feelings of self respect and self confidence. But if we do not exercise good judgment we can also develop in them feelings of self depreciation. If we can help the child develop self confidence, we are contributing indirectly to his happiness.

Closely related to these desires is the desire for freedom—freedom to be ourselves and to realize a development of whatever capacities we may possess. But true freedom comes through discipline. Only that individual who has developed serviceable habits of living, who habitually lives in such a way as to conserve his physical vigor, and who obeys the laws which make for successful group life, is truly free. The habits which we develop may either enslave us or set us free. If our habits are those of the physical appetites, over indulgence in food or drink or the like, or those of selfish living, we become slaves. If on the other hand we develop habits of control, we are set free for the development of those activities which represent the true self. It is because we desire for our children

freedom in its truest sense that we wish them to become obedient, well disciplined individuals.

We are so constituted that we strive always for something better just ahead. The urge to better our situation and condition of life, to continue learning and increase our store of knowledge, gives purpose to life.

So often in thinking forward to our children's future we think in terms of the material things which we may give to them. It troubles us to think of our children lacking the material comforts of life. But is material comfort the best we can leave them? Successful living is not judged in terms of dollars, houses, farms, or land. These alone do not bring completeness nor contentment to life. Are not our highest desires for them rather in terms of attitudes toward life and in the development of serviceable methods of meeting life's problems?

For our children we desire that they approach all of the problems which life may bring them with determination and eagerness. We do not wish for them a life free of conflict. That would be wishing the impossible. But we desire that they approach the conflict situations with confidence and hope. We wish to help them grow into confident, hopeful, self directing and self controlled individuals.

We should judge our disciplinary methods in the light of this aim.

Inner Control versus Outer Control

We should ask ourselves as our children grow up, "Are they learning to depend more and more on us or more and more on themselves for direction?" Self-control is not learned suddenly when the growing man or woman reaches the age of 18 or 21.

The earlier the child learns to obey the necessary routine of home and school, the sooner will he experience the freedom which is derived from obedience. Some things are not open to debate. He does automatically those things which are necessary for health, for cleanliness, for good sportsmanship, for satisfactory family and group living. He learns not to become emotional about matters which should become routine procedures.

The aim, then, of obedience is not compliance to the wishes of persons but adjustment to the demands of life itself. While the child is very young the parent needs to interpret the laws of living to the child. But gradually, as the child grows older, he learns from his own experiences the things that he may do and those which he may not do. He is ready and willing to cope with difficulties as they arise. He needs our intelligent guidance if he is to form habits of control and self-direction. We should, therefore, look upon our methods of discipline, not as a means of restraining undesirable behavior, but as a means of helping the child to develop serviceable methods of meeting his own problems tas they arise.

All of our disciplinary methods should be judged by the measuring stick of "What has the child learned from this experience?"

If he is learning to depend upon us for guidance, we are not teaching him wisely, for he is learning to rely upon the strength of others and not upon his own strength. If on the other hand, he is learning through our guidance and counsel to develop standards by which he may judge his own behavior, we shall be doing our job of parenthood well.

Perhaps the best heritage we can leave our children is a keen zest for living and learning. If the child learns to look upon each new problem as a challenge; if he is desirous of adding daily to his fund of information by acquiring new knowledge; if his relationships with other people bring both to him and to them more of satisfaction than annoyance; if his attitude toward life is one of courage, then our disciplinary procedures have been a help and not a hindrance to him. He is learning that life is good.

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Suggestions for Further Reading

Pamphlets

CHILD MANAGEMENT. Children's Bureau Publication No. 143. U. S. Dept. Labor.
GUIDING THE ADOLESCENT. Children's Bureau Publication 225. U. S. Dept. Labor.
REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT. Child Study Association of America, New York.
DISCIPLINARY DEVICES—REWARDS. Child Study Association of America, New York.
DISCIPLINARY DEVICES—PUNISHMENT. Child Study Association of America, New York.
OBEDIENCE. Child Study Association of America, New York.
POINTS ON CHILD BEHAVIOR. National Committee for Mental Hygiene, New York.
SUCCESS AND FAILURE AS CONDITIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH. National Committee for Mental Health, New York.
BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN. National Committee for Mental Hygiene.

Books -- Non-Fiction

CHILD CARE AND TRAINING. M. L. Faegre and J. E. Anderson.
CHILDREN FROM SEED TO SAPLING. M. M. Reynolds.
CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY. H. H. Anderson.
CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY. F. Powdermaker and L. I. Grimes
COMMONSENSE BOOK OF BABY AND CHILD CARE. B. Spook.
HELPING CHILDREN LEARN. E. Waring and M. W. Johnson.
INFANT AND CHILD IN THE CULTURE OF TODAY. A. Gesell and F. L. Ilg.
LEARNING TO CARE FOR CHILDREN. D. E. Bradbury and E. D. Amidon.
LIVING WITH CHILDREN. G. E. Chittenden.
MODERN WAYS WITH CHILDREN. E. B. Hurlock.
NORMAL YOUTH AND ITS EVERYDAY PROBLEMS. A. D. Thom.
PARENTS' QUESTIONS. Child Study Association.
THE CHILD FROM FIVE TO TEN. A. Gesell and F. L. Ilg.
THE GANG AGE. P. H. Furfey.
THE PARENTS' MANUAL. A. W. M. Wolf.
WE, THE PARENTS. Sidonie M. Gruenberg.

Books -- Fiction

A LANTERN IN HER HAND. Bess Streeter Aldrich.
MY ANTONIA. Wilda Cather.
SILAS CROCKETT. Mary Ellen Chase.
LIFE WITH FATHER. Clarence Day.
SORREL AND SON. Warwick Deeping.
MY LITTLE BOY. Carl Swald.
TIME OUT OF MIND. Rachel Field.
THE FAMILY. Ruth Suckow.
MAMA'S BANK ACCOUNT. Kathryn Forbes.

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